

THE FIRST SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

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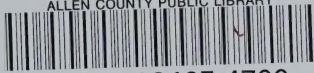
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THE FIRST

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

SKETCH OF THE MUNCIE PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1874-1949

INDIANA COLLECTION

Compiled By

Mrs. Elizabeth Hinckley Middleton

June 1949  
THE MUNCIE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Muncie, Indiana

PUBLIC LIBRARY  
FORT WAYNE & ALLEN CO., IND.

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Allen County Public Library  
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Frances Wilson, Clerical Assistant, Children's Room

\* Part-time during school year, full time each summer  
\*\* Appointment effective July 16, 1949  
\*\*\* Appointment effective June 16, 1949



## Forerunners of the Muncie Public Library

Probably since 1853, Muncie, Indiana has had some sort of a library. Under a law passed in May of that year, a county library was established in the Court House, with one of the county officers acting as Librarian. This library was maintained by reserving ten per cent of the net proceeds from the sale of county property within the city of Muncie.

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Muncie was incorporated as a city in February of 1866 with a population of 2,196. That same year a law went into effect providing for the establishment of township libraries, and under this law the county library was enlarged and went into the custody of the township trustee. The county library was in the upper room of the old Court House where books could be rented by the day, month, or year. The township library was located on East Main Street, west of the Neely home, and Wilson R. Smith was the Librarian. Mr. Smith later became the Sheriff and removed to the residence at the jail, from which the books were circulated.

Henry C. Marsh, Muncie Postmaster, bought books in 1868 for a "Circulating Library" and as the people had lost interest



in the county and township libraries. Mr. Marsh obtained permission to put the remainder of these books with his library and loan them free of cost. As might be expected, he kept the library at the Post Office.

William Maclure, of New Harmony, Indiana, left funds in will to establish libraries for working men. A total of 160 libraries were established with his bequest and one of them was located in Muncie at about this time.

#### Organizational Meeting

Citizens of Muncie were called together in a mass meeting on May 30, 1874 for the purpose of organizing a stock company to finance a public library and reading room. The meeting was called by Hamilton S. McRae, Superintendent of Schools. Those present at the meeting in addition to Mr. McRae were: Walter Marsh, William B. Lline, William Brotherton, Carleton E Shipley, Thomas J. Brady, Erville B. Bishop, James Bly Boyce, Marcus C. Smith, John W. Ryan, J. N. Templar, Dr. William Glenn, Frank Ellis, Stanton Hussey, N. F. Ethell and David H. Case. All took two shares of stock except Mr. Case who subscribed for five shares. Additional stock was later sold to



other citizens of Muncie.

Articles of incorporation were filed with the Recorder of Delaware County, and the following officers were elected: Hamilton S. McRae was chosen the first President; John W. Ryan Secretary; E. B. Bishop, Treasurer.

The Common Council of the City bought stock in the amount of \$3,600.00 and this virtually put the library under the control of the city. The Muncie Public Library was first located in the east room of the second floor of the city building and was granted this space free for the first year.

The following, concerning the opening of the library, is taken from the Muncie News of June 3, 1875:

On Monday night the evening's exercises were opened by placing O. M. Todd in the chair. Rev. Guthrie then delivered a very fine prayer, and was followed by the regular address of the evening by Rev. Todd. He was succeeded by Mr. J. W. Marsh and George McCullough. Mrs. Patterson then delivered a short address, after which the meeting was adjourned.

The first books were collected and purchased from the old county, township, Philalethian Society and Working Men's Library consisting in all of 2,199 volumes. About \$1,500.00 was used in purchasing these books and \$300.00 was spent in fur-

nishing the room. On June 1, 1875 the library was opened for business.

### The Librarians

Mrs. Hattie Patterson was chosen as the first Librarian at a salary of \$250.00 per year, with the privilege of selling stationery in the library room. Mrs. Patterson served as Librarian until 1881 and in her final report made in January 1881 she states:

In February 1875, the books from the county and township libraries were given in trust and sent to the public library; that the library committee about the same time purchased Henry Marsh's circulating library of over 1,300 books, and the library of the Workingmen's Institute was donated. The first book in the catalog was donated sometime during 1874 by Miss Lucy Trueworthy, and the first donation made in 1875 by Thomas Kirby. June 1, 1875 the library was opened to circulation. Up to that time there had been entered on the accession catalog 2,199 books.

In 1881 Caroline Fleming was chosen to succeed Mrs. Patterson. She served in that capacity until 1890, when Mrs. Emma Sparr filled the position for one year. In 1891 Katherine Wilson was elected Librarian and held the position until the reorganization took place in 1903. At that date there were 13,000 volumes in the library. During 1903 Ardena M. Chapin



was appointed Chief Librarian and thus was serving at the time the new library building was opened. She was succeeded in October 1911 by Margaret Edna Streeter, who was followed on March 1, 1917 by Mary Torrance. Miss Torrance served as Librarian for ten years until the summer of 1927 when Gertrude Schwab became Chief Librarian for three years. In November 1930 Susan Reed Weimer was appointed and served until ill health brought her resignation in September 1934. Mrs. Sally (Robards) Roberts was appointed Librarian on June 1, 1935 and held the position until September 1940. Walter H. Kaiser, the first man to hold this position, became Chief Librarian in the Fall of 1940, remaining in Muncie for five years. He was succeeded in September 1945 by Dan A. Williams, who is the present Chief Librarian.

#### The Carnegie Benevolence

It was on February 21, 1901 that a meeting of the Library Board was held for the purpose of considering the advisability of asking Andrew Carnegie for a gift to the City of Muncie for library purposes. All the members of the Library Board were present including: T. F. Rose, President; Mrs. Nellie M. Stouder, Secretary; N. F. Ethell, Treasurer; A. W. Brady; J. R. Marsh; and

Mrs. M. C. Claypool. After the matter was thoroughly discussed they decided to ask Mr. Carnegie for the sum of fifty thousand dollars for this purpose.

About this time the Commercial Club of Muncie began to agitate the question and the Library Board turned the matter to that organization. Following is their correspondence with Carnegie:

Muncie, Indiana, Feb. 27, 1901

Andrew Carnegie, Esq.

Dear Sir:--

We have been appointed as a committee of the Commercial Club of this city, to ask you for assistance in providing a public library for the city. We hope it will be convenient to you to investigate the conditions, which we believe will make the project worthy of a place in your splendid scheme of public benefactions.

We have a population of about 20,000 city and suburbs. It is a manufacturing city, and has grown from a substantial county seat with a population of 6,000 in twelve years to its present size. It has also, by public spirit, developed in a permanent and progressive manner. We already have a fine beginning for a public library. If we had a building worth \$50,000 it could be liberally maintained and would be a perpetual fountain of intelligence and worthy of your noble efforts.

We would be glad to furnish any additional facts as to this project that may be desired.

Yours respectfully,  
J. C. Johnson  
James A. Daly  
Hardin Roads



The answer was as follows:

Hardin Roads, Esq.,  
Muncie, Indiana

Dear Sirs:--

Yours of February 27th received. If the city of Muncie will furnish a suitable site and agree to maintain a free public library at a cost of not less than \$5,000 per year, Mr. Carnegie will be glad to give \$50,000 for a building.

Respectfully yours,  
James Bertram, Secretary

On March twenty-fifth the City Council passed a resolution guaranteeing perpetual maintenance for a free public library, and agreed to meet the stipulated minimum annual revenue.

About this time George W. Spilker gave his home to the city of Muncie for library use. This home was sold for \$6,000.00 and the funds used to help procure the present site of the Main Library on the corner of Jackson and Jefferson Streets at a cost of \$13,000.00.

Wing and Mahuring of Fort Wayne were chosen as architects for the new building, and the contract for the construction work was awarded to Morrow and Morrow of Muncie. On June 1, 1902 the foundation was laid for the new building. The building was completed two years later at a total cost of \$55,900.85.

The building was dedicated January 1, 1904 with appropriate

exercises, and the Mayor of Muncie, Charles W. Sherritt, formally turned over the keys to the Library Board. A souvenir spoon with the picture of the new library engraved in its bowl was presented to the small daughter of Mr. Carnegie. This gift so pleased him that in return he gave an additional gift of \$5,000.00 which was used for equipment for the new building.

Beginning January 1, 1904 the library has been open daily from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P. M. except Sundays and Holidays. All persons living in Muncie and Center Township may have membership privileges without charge. All others may have the same privileges by the payment of a fee of two dollars per year.

#### Main Library Development

The first two years of occupancy of the new building drew heavily upon the finances of the library and changes had to be made. After the library had been open about a year it was found that the accommodations for reference books were too small so the room occupied by the Children's Department became the Reference Room. This was accomplished in February 1905 when a room on the ground level was equipped for children at a cost of approximately \$700.00. The Children's Room was



furnished attractively in weathered oak. In early days a Children's Literary Club was started, and committees were formed to arrange the programs which consisted of discussions and papers on literary subjects. The American Association of University Women sponsored a reading program in 1933 in cooperation with the Public Schools. Teachers helped the Library Staff in making reading lists for all the grades from the first to eighth inclusive, and the Printing Department of Central High School printed these lists. The Children's Room book collection as of March 1, 1949 numbered 12,386 volumes.

As the years passed more changes had to be made in the Main Library Building. In 1936 shelves were constructed in one of the ground floor rooms to house some of the least used bound periodicals.

Early in its history the Muncie Public Library became a depository of documents published by the United States Government. These documents come to the library without charge, but the library has certain obligations of binding, preservation and storage to which it must be faithful. In recent years the library has been permitted to be selective in designating the

document sets which it wishes to receive. As of January 1, 1949 the Muncie Public Library had 62,621 United States documents in its collection. These quickly became a storage problem, and the decision was made in 1920 to change the auditorium on the ground floor, across from the Children's Room, which had been used for story hour, meetings and exhibits, to a storage room for the document collection.

There had been a growing need for facilities to serve business and industry, so with the abandonment of the auditorium a portion of this room was made into a Business and Technical Reading Room. All books and periodicals relating to these subjects were placed in this room. The books were listed in a separate card catalog in the room as well as in the catalog in the Adult Department. In February 1936 a reorganization of the Business and Technical Room took place including a reduction of hours, yet stationing an assistant on duty in the room.

One of the difficulties encountered in service to business and industry has been the need of professional personnel to interpret the collection. Finances had not permitted the



addition of extra personnel to continuously operate this reading room, so in 1941 it was decided to move the collection to the north half of the Reference Room in the Adult Department, where the professional staff could give assistance to patrons in the use of these materials. Technical books have a rapid rate of obsolescence, so in 1947 with the assistance of a special book appropriation, many new books were added, and of the existing collection some books were placed in the general stacks but many were discarded. Since that date a regular book budget has been set up for this collection in order to assure consistent and regular purchase of these important materials. With the financial assistance of several Muncie industries, files of several important technical journals were completed and bound in 1948.

The space vacated by the shift of the Business and Technical room was then converted to an office for the Extension Service, thus providing more space for their work. The small room previously occupied as the Extension Service office was made into a Staff Room, a much needed facility.

A matter of concern for years had been the transition of

adolescents from the use of the Children's Room to the Adult Department. It was felt that a special collection of books would be helpful. A small collection was set up experimentally in 1947. A unique feature was the arrangement of these books on the shelves by reading interest categories rather than in the more conventional manner of the Dewey Classification. This experiment proved successful so expansion continued until 1947. By this time a special alcove had been set aside in the east reading room, furnished with attractive furniture and a greatly expanded collection of books, the addition of a file of pamphlet material on vocations and an active collection of college catalogs.

The Popular Library was developed in the east reading room in 1946. In this informal reading room the library patron will now find current newspapers, periodicals of general interest, recent fiction of all types, short stories, biography, and travel of general interest and recent publication date.

The Adult Department book stock, exclusive of documents, as of March 1, 1949 totaled 44,507 volumes.



### Extension Service Promoted

Early in 1906 three deposit stations were started, one in Avondale, one in Congerville, and a third in Whiteley. The purpose in establishing these stations was to reach the people, especially the children, who lived at too great a distance to come to the Main Library. A collection of books was placed in Longfellow School in 1915 to be used in connection with a night school held in that building. These books were removed after the night school was discontinued. In 1916 a deposit station was placed at the Y.M.C.A. These various book collections were known as sub-stations and assistants were sent out from the Main Library to circulate the books.

It was not until 1921 that extension work, known as Extension Service, was organized under a trained librarian. Book collections were then placed in many of the classrooms of the township and city elementary schools, as well as in the Children's Home of Delaware County. A collection was also placed in a grocery at Andersonville to serve adult needs of that community. A book truck, holding 800 volumes, was purchased by the Library Board in 1923. This was one of the first book-

trucks to be used by a public library in the State of Indiana. It was purchased to convey books to the elementary schools and as a means of serving adults by making regular weekly trips to the homes of residents of outlying Center Township. With the increasing cost of this home service, the Center Township tax rate became inadequate for its support and the Library Board was forced to discontinue this house to house service to the residents of Center Township at the beginning of 1948.

During the summer vacation months, in cooperation with the recreational program for children, the booktruck makes trips each week to the parks, playgrounds and various school play centers to distribute books and to hold a story hour for the children.

In addition to the elementary schools, collections are placed in the Wilson and Blaine Junior High School Libraries to supplement their own books. The classroom libraries are visited each month, to change all or part of the books on loan, mend books, and to take inventory and statistics.

There still remain several adult stations operated by the Extension Service, namely: The Ontario Manufacturing Company,



Maria Bingham Hall (nurses residence) and the Delaware County Children's Home (for the use of the matrons). These adult stations operate as small circulating libraries and the collections are changed frequently.

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The most recent of extension units is service to the patients at Ball Memorial Hospital, begun on June 1, 1946. The Ball Memorial Hospital Auxiliary had previously given such service on a voluntary basis. Under the agreement the Auxiliary continues to furnish magazine subscriptions and has a sustaining interest in the project. The Hospital cooperates in securing the return of books and magazines when the patient is discharged. The Personnel of the Extension Service of the library visit each room and ward twice weekly, offering books and magazines to those convalescing patients who care to read. In addition to the carefully selected collection of books kept at the hospital, special requests of patients are filled from the collection of the Main Library. Before assuming the responsibility for service to patients, the library made a study of the methods used by the Gary Public Library where similar service had been in process for twenty years.

The Extension Service bookstock as of March 1, 1949 came to 18,112 books.

### The Branch System

Owing to the fact that the city of Muncie had spread out a great deal, particularly in the south and west portions of the city and these areas were becoming thickly populated, it was considered urgent that at least one branch library be established as deposit stations could not command or supply enough books to meet the needs of this new reading public. In the Librarian's annual report for 1922 she stated that "the greatest need in library work was a branch library on the south side in the vicinity of Wilson Junior High School". At a meeting of the Library Board in April 1923, Mrs. Elizabeth Keckley presented a petition signed by nearly five hundred residents of the south side, asking for a branch library. The petition was favorably received and the Library Board instructed those sponsoring the establishment of the branch to suggest a suitable location on which the building could be erected. Mrs. Keckley suggested that the petitioners were in favor of a location at the corner of Thirteenth and



Franklin Streets. Very little was done concerning a branch library until 1929.

### The Maring Bequest

Mrs. Grace Keiser Maring, a former member of the Library Board who served when extension plans were being formed, left in her will a bequest to the city of Muncie the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars for the building of a branch library, the site of which was to be agreeable to her heirs. After much deliberation it was decided to erect the building on a site in Heekin Park at the southwest corner of the park facing Madison Street. The site was chosen with the consent of the Park Board. Hawk and Smenner were chosen as architects. Library funds equipped the building and have maintained it ever since.

The Grace Keiser Maring Branch Library was formally dedicated on October 20, 1930. At that time George Camp Keiser made the presentation of the bequest to the city. In the absence of E. G. Hayler, President of the Library Board, the acceptance of the legacy was made by Webb Hunt. Talks were made by a number of leading citizens, including Mayor George Dale, Frank Bernard, Judge Guthrie, Will F. White and H. L.

Parkinson, expressing appreciation of the memorial library as a gift to the city. The Woman's Relief Corps presented an American flag which was accepted by Mrs. H. H. Orr. The public was invited to view the library after the dedicatory services.

The Maring Branch Library is equipped with a community room which may be engaged for meetings. An hourly fee is charged as payment for the custodian and to cover other expenses involved. In 1936 the library was presented with a lovely oil painting entitled "The Breakfast Table" by Clarence Keiser Hinkle. The painting was a gift of the artist, a nephew of Mrs. Maring.

The Maring Branch is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12:30 to 8:30 P.M. and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 12:30 to 6:00 P.M. The bookstock of the branch as of March 1, 1949 was 12,373.

#### Lincoln Branch

The Librarian's report for 1933 stated that "The Lincoln School, a most deserving center, has for years been anticipating a branch of the Muncie Public Library. The citizens of the community cooperating with the Board of Trustees



are hoping to establish this service."

Following this report the Lincoln Community Club, which has been such a beneficial agent to the community, instituted a movement under the leadership of Webb Hunt, then Principal of Lincoln School, to locate a branch library in the Lincoln School. The Library Board, with a depression budget, was without funds to accomplish this project, so the matter was taken before the School Board who agreed to furnish the room and utilities. The room was decorated by P.W.A. labor and an outside entrance was constructed providing suitable access for patrons of the library. The loan desk and card catalog unit were presented to the new branch by Ball Brothers Company, while the Lincoln Community Club and the Glascock Company furnished the room with other initial equipment including tables and chairs. In recent years the library has added considerably to the equipment at this branch.

The dedicatory services for the new library were held June 5, 1934. Mrs. H. H. Orr in behalf of the Woman's Relief Corps presented the library with an American flag which was accepted by Mrs. William Youse. Paul Perdieu gave an appreciation. Talks

were given by Judge Guthrie and Superintendent of Schools, D. W. Horton. The following men were introduced to those present and spoke a few words: Mayor George R. Dale; Vernon Davis, Secretary of the School Board; Lester R. Bush, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce; and Ora Shroyer, President of the City Council. The library was opened for public use June 6, 1934.

From the first year to the present date, Lincoln Branch Library has had a remarkable growth. Located in a community with a growing population, the use of the library by both children and adults has been ever increasing. The urgent need at this time of the ~~seventy-fifth~~ anniversary of the library is a building to house Lincoln Branch, located in the immediate locality of Lincoln School.

Lincoln Branch hours are Monday, ~~Tuesday~~ and Thursday, 12:30 to 8:30 P.M., Wednesday and Friday, 12:30 to 6:00 P.M. Lincoln Branch bookstock on March 1, 1949 totaled 14,282 volumes.

#### The Library In Two Wars

The Librarian's report for 1917 and 1918 show the extent



to which the library cooperated with the United States Government during the war period. The library loaned to the Armory for the use of the soldiers, government drill manuals and similar pamphlets. In the summer of 1917 a call was issued by the Indiana Public Library Commission for books to be donated by the citizens of Indiana for the use of soldiers at Fort Benjamin Harrison. A collection of 270 volumes were sent from Muncie. The same year the Librarian was appointed a member of the Indiana War council, organized under the authority of the War Department to solicit funds for the establishment of permanent libraries at various camps of the United States Army. During the year 1918 about 1,500 books were sent to Camp Taylor and Fort Benjamin Harrison.

The Muncie Public Library carried on during the years of the Second World War by giving as much service as possible even though the staff was greatly depleted. The Chief Librarian was given a leave of absence to make a study for the United States Office of Education concerning libraries and national defense. Many books were purchased and made available on various phases of the war, and government documents on civ-

ilian defense were made available to the citizens of Muncie through the library. The document collection was a reference source for many wartime regulations.

At the closing of the Delaware County Office of Civilian Defense on September 30, 1945 the Board of Directors requested that their records be turned over to the Muncie Public Library. These volumes have been permanently bound and added to the Muncie Collection.

### Recent Progress

A step forward in the library's program of adult education was the initiation of the Great Books Discussion Group in Muncie under the sponsorship of the library. In this activity the Muncie Public Library is a part of the nation-wide Great Books program initiated by the University of Chicago. In 1949 the library is completing its third year of this program, and many of the initial members of the group are still participating. One of the unique features is the system of dual leadership, and unlike many groups the leading responsibility is rotated among all the members of the group. Each season consists of the reading and discussion of excerpts



from eighteen of the great books of western civilization.

Since 1946 considerable reorganization of personnel has taken place. One of the first accomplishments was to divide the duties between clerical and professional activities. For the former duties, high school graduates are hired, leaving the professional responsibilities and supervision to those staff members who have graduate professional education. To improve staff morale the personnel regulations were improved and codified in 1946.

The reorganization of personnel has made possible greater professional assistance to the public. This has been particularly true at the Main Library where the information desk is staffed by professional librarians every hour the library is open in order to give prompt assistance to patrons in person or by telephone.

Greater attention has been given to reading guidance in the past few years through frequently changing displays in all the units. This has made patrons aware of the many resources of the library.

Beginning with 1949 the long overdue microfilming of the

files of Muncie newspapers has begun. Muncie Newspapers Incorporated have agreed to bear half of the expense and the work will be completed over a period of years. Simultaneously with the filming of the back file, the current issues of the Muncie newspapers will be filmed each month and the library will no longer bind the newspapers.

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